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TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE OF SECRETARY-GENERAL KOFI ANNAN AT HEADQUARTERS, 5 AUGUST 1998

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL: I would like to tell you this morning that we have made very good progress at this round of talks on East Timor. The Ministers have agreed to hold in-depth discussions on the proposals for special status based on wide-ranging autonomy for East Timor, without prejudice to their basic positions of principle. It is also hoped that an agreement could be reached before the end of the year on this issue. So we will start the discussions and hope that we can come to some understanding before the end of the year.

The Ministers have also agreed to involve the East Timorese more closely in the search for a solution, and they have welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to intensify his consultations with the East Timorese. Further, we have noticed the positive developments in East Timor recently: the beginning of reduction of forces and the Government's intention to further gradually reduce the level of military presence in East Timor and to expedite the release of East Timorese political prisoners.

We have also agreed to continue our consultations on these and other related aspects of the East Timorese question. The Ministers have agreed with me that the all-inclusive East Timorese dialogue should resume by October. The Ministers have also agreed to establish interest sections in friendly embassies in each other's capitals by the end of 1998 and to relax visa policies towards each other's nationals.

The last decision we took was to have the next senior officials meeting of the two sides under the chairmanship of my Special Representative, Ambassador Jamsheed Marker, by the end of September 1998.

I would like to take this opportunity, first of all, to thank the Ministers for their statesmanship and their spirit of cooperation and compromise, which permitted us to make this progress, if not breakthrough. I would also like to thank Ambassador Marker, my Special Representative, for the extraordinary work he has put in. He and the team, a small staff from the United Nations Secretariat, have done a remarkable job, and I am grateful to you and the team.

We will now take your questions. I think that copies of the communiqué have been made available to you.

QUESTION: The withdrawal of forces has begun in East Timor. At what point do you think you will you be able to say that all the forces will be withdrawn, or do [inaudible] in the foreseeable future?

MR. ALATAS: Well, we have been talking in Indonesia about reduction of forces because, to a certain extent — like in all other regions of Indonesia — there may always be a residue of forces there, but in a much more reduced

form. This is what is happening now. The first reductions have taken place. They will continue gradually in stages and, of course, always taking into account the security conditions and the security needs of the region.

QUESTION: My question is directed to the Indonesian Foreign Minister. Sir, I wonder if the decision to expedite the release of the East Timorese political prisoners specifically includes Mr. Xanana Gusmao. And the second part of my question would be whether the decision to consult East Timorese on a more formal basis through the Secretary-General recognizes implicitly that their views are not represented by the Indonesian Government, as you have said in the past.

MR. ALATAS: As to the first part of your question, I have had occasion to explain that Mr. Xanana Gusmao does not qualify for this present wave of amnesties being given to political prisoners and detainees because Mr. Xanana Gusmao, unlike those prisoners and detainees whom we are now releasing, did not only engage in flag-waving or demonstrations or, you know, other actions usually connected with political actions. Also, during the time that he was leading the forces in East Timor whom we have called security-disturbance perpetrators, he has killed, he has burned villages, he has killed innocent villagers, he has raided the properties of villagers, et cetera. And all these are classified in our penal code as criminal acts. And I am sure they are classified the same way in many other penal codes. And it is for these criminal acts that he has been brought before the courts and convicted. So he does not qualify in the present wave of release of political prisoners and political detainees.

However, we have also said at the same time that his is a special case. We do foresee, we do visualize the release of Xanana Gusmão as part and parcel of an overall solution to the East Timor question, which we hope will now come as soon as we can agree on that solution. So he will be released at that time, but not now in the context of the present releases.

As to the second part of your question, as we are now reaching, we think, a critical stage in the search for a solution, we do see the need to make sure that certain East Timorese personalities — leaders, both formal and informal — are kept abreast of developments. And perhaps also it would be useful to have their views on the progress of the tripartite talks. The negotiations, the formal negotiations, will continue in the tripartite context. But we will have a channel now, as agreed upon by all sides, whereby the Secretary-General could at his discretion continue to consult the views and keep those whom he is consulting abreast of developments.

Now, that does not mean that we are changing our position that those East Timorese who are in Indonesia have always been consulted. In fact, they have been part and parcel of our efforts. But this is specifically, I think, directed towards those who have been abroad and who have not been in a

position to be fully consulted. But those who are in Indonesia have always been consulted and indeed, more than that, have always participated in the talks.

QUESTION: What kind of calendar is being discussed for the wide-range autonomy?

MR. ALATAS: You mean, to talk about it?

QUESTION: No, for the autonomy itself. Are you thinking of creating a five-year, 10-year —

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL: I think that if you look at the first paragraph of the communiqué, we are going to be holding in-depth discussions on these proposals. I think we are not there yet, because we are going to have in-depth discussions, and we indicated that we hoped we can iron everything out and have an agreement or understanding by the end of the year, if that answers your question.

QUESTION: What are the details about this special status for East Timor which was proposed by Indonesia?

MR. ALATAS: That is one of the proposals of Indonesia: to give special status, a special autonomous region, to East Timor. The substantive elements of this autonomy are going to be further discussed in depth, in detail now. We have not discussed it in detail yet. But the outline of our proposal is for a special province, a special autonomous region based on wide-ranging autonomy.

QUESTION: To the Secretary-General first, whether you have identified any of the East Timorese representatives with whom you intend to hold further consultations, including Mr. Ramos Horta. And the same question to the two Foreign Ministers, with an added coda to them: Have they identified the countries that will have the interest sections?

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL: Yes, we have a clear idea of those we would want to stay in touch with. There may be additional ones, but we do have a clear idea of those. As you know, I will be leaving for Portugal shortly, and already there I will be seeing Mr. Horta and Bishop Belo. So it already begins. And we have quite a clear idea of those key leaders that we would want, both within and without.

MR. GAMA: It is the Netherlands. The Netherlands has been representing our interests in Jakarta since we closed our embassy there, and we will ask them to go on in that diplomatic task in cooperation with Portugal.

MR. ALATAS: Unlike Portugal, we don't have a country representing our interests there, so we have not decided yet formally where we are going to

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place our diplomats. But we hope to get the concurrence of Thailand, which has a representation there, a diplomatic mission there, to be able to accept our diplomats to be stationed there.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary-General, do you think the agreements reached today are fair to the East Timorese? You know, their demand is for total independence, and what you call it here is "autonomy" granted by Indonesia. Do you think it is fair to what they are asking for?

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL: We have a very serious proposal on the table, and as I said we are going to discuss it. And I also indicated that we all believe that this is progress in the work we have been doing. We are also going to be intensifying our consultations with the East Timorese. And I think after we have done all that they will probably have a chance to answer that question too. But I think we are now in the beginning of a process which is moving forward, and I think let's move ahead and see after our consultations where we will be.

MR. ALATAS: Could I add a request that if you refer to the Timorese, please refer to all the 800,000 Timorese and not only those who are vocal in asking for one particular solution. There is a huge

majority in Indonesia which has an entirely different view than the ones to which you are referring.

QUESTION: Would you consider this a breakthrough in the 15 years of talks that have been going on on East Timor?

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL: I think, given the history of the record, this has been important progress. You used the word "breakthrough"; I don't think that is exaggerated given the history and the circumstances of the past.

QUESTION: The statement says that this is without prejudice to the basic positions of principle; I am wondering whether Indonesia still wants international recognition of East Timor as part of Indonesia before going any further on the autonomy issue.

MR. ALATAS: Well, the sentence says exactly what it means, and that means that for now we are going to hold in-depth discussions first on these proposals without any of the two sides giving up or changing its basic principles. I think it's very clear; it speaks for itself. When we reach the point, we will cross that bridge.

QUESTION: Has the basic position been changed by the annexation of that region? I want to ask the Ministers — the three of them, please.

Moderator: You want to know if the basic positions have changed?

QUESTION: Yes, about the annexation.

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL: I think the last answer Foreign Minister Alatas gave has already dealt with that by referring to what paragraph 1 says.

QUESTION: For MR. ALATAS: I was wondering, in terms of the question of wide-ranging autonomy, how far are you willing to consider the sort of functions an autonomous East Timor could take? Could it determine its own governing policies, for example, in terms of tax collection, in terms of basic governance of its people? Or are you considering something more limited than that?

MR. ALATAS: In presenting our proposal we have always stressed in one breath that we were willing to sit down and negotiate the substantive elements of this wide-ranging autonomy, which means that this is not a unilaterally conceived or a unilaterally granted autonomy, but an autonomy that conforms with international norms. Now, autonomies in the world — you have various models. But they all conform roughly to one particular norm, and that is that you can only speak of autonomy when you give all the rights to the population except in three fields: foreign affairs, external defence and certain monetary and fiscal policies. Because in whatever autonomy, all over the world, you will see that these three functions are always reserved for the central Government. Now this is precisely what we are thinking about. We are going to discuss, to negotiate in depth or to discuss in depth, what it will take for this autonomy, taking into account the specific conditions in East Timor. And certainly it would include their own Governments, except in the three fields. That means governance in economic affairs, in political affairs, in education, in cultural policy and everything except foreign policy, external defence and certain aspects of monetary and fiscal policy.

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL: That was the last question. I think before we end this session I would ask each of the Ministers to make a brief statement.

Jaime, shall we go with you first?

MR. GAMA: I thank very much UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Ambassador Marker for the work they have been doing and the great impulse they have given to these negotiations. Obviously we are moving. It's not a complete road; it's a step. It's not a global solution; it's a particular negotiation on a particular point. We have moved from the principal positions we keep to a common ground for negotiating those particular matters under the leadership of the Secretary-General. And I hope that in the context of this process, as it has been referred to, Indonesia will be keeping commitments regarding progress, regarding openness, regarding the reduction of the army and the release of the political prisoners. And also, it is very important that, as a

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decision of this meeting, the Secretary-General is going to consult more intensively with the East Timorese representatives both outside and in the territory individually or in groups, because they also are a part of this process, as the substance of this problem.

MR. ALATAS: Mr. Secretary-General I, too, would like to join my colleague in first of all thanking you, Sir, for the role that you have played in making this progress possible. And I also thank Ambassador Jamsheed Marker and all his able associates for the hard work done. I think that what we have achieved here is indeed not yet a breakthrough in substance, perhaps, but certainly very good progress in the way in which we will proceed towards a solution of the problem. That is, in the words of your predecessor, a comprehensive, just and internationally acceptable solution.

Indonesia has put forward a proposal which we believe is the most realistic, viable and most peaceful way towards finding an overall, comprehensive and just solution, because it takes into account all the necessary factors and conditions pertaining in East Timor: the long history of strife, its geopolitical and its geo-strategic position, its socio-cultural make-up and so on. And therefore we hope that at the end of the road, after we have gone through this in-depth discussion, it will be seen, it will be recognized, that it is indeed a most realistic, viable and just solution, and above all a solution that promises to bring peace and reconciliation to the East Timorese people, and not further strife, further intensified tensions, continuing conflict and even resurgence of civil war, as other proposals may result in.

And therefore we are very happy now that we can work on this proposal at least to go into depth and see how far we can get. We believe that this is the recognition that, again, Indonesia is putting on the table a very concrete proposal and a very real, genuine proposal for a solution, and not, as was erroneously interpreted by certain quarters, a bogus proposal or nothing new. I think the very fact that we have this agreement now is a recognition that it is a genuine proposal, a concrete proposal that can lead to a just and peaceful solution.

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary-General.

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL: Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

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